

# **The future of Leconfield Open Space**

**Nanpantan Ward Residents' Group  
and  
Friends of Leconfield Open Space**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide an outline plan for the future management of the land at the top of Leconfield Road, here termed Leconfield Open Space (LOS). Nanpantan residents have shown in no uncertain terms how much they care about keeping this land as an open space, with over 250 attending a protest at the height of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and an on-line petition to protect the open space attracted more than 700 signatures. Residents have now formed a Friends Group (FLOS - Friends of Leconfield Open Space) that will be responsible for managing and maintaining the open space. FLOS will fully fund the management and maintenance and with no financial commitment required from the Council.

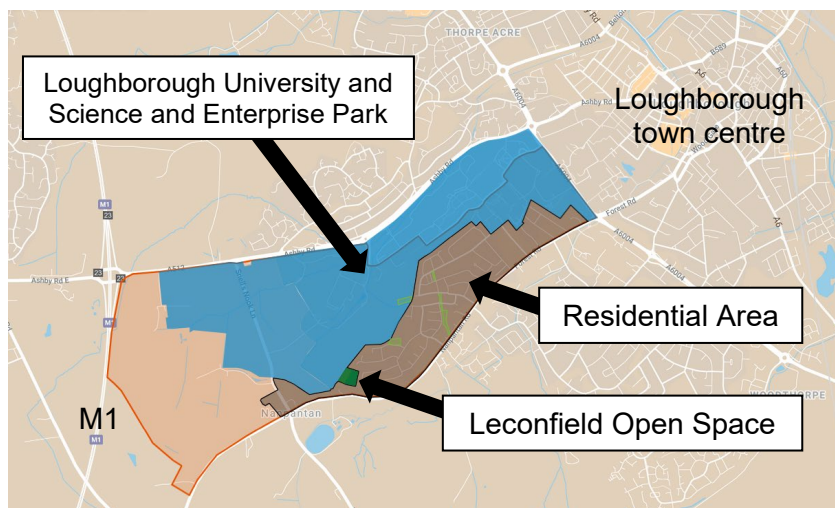
The LOS is currently privately owned and, for the land to be protected for the future, current attempts at development will need to be rebuffed by the Council. Protection will not be an issue if the Council is determined to act appropriately; national and local policies protect open space of public value, the Council is committed to addressing the 'identified needs in open space provision' (Nanpantan has a huge shortfall) and we have prepared a very strong Local Green Space application.

FLOS will be happy to work with the current owners, the Jean Cope Charity (JCC), to manage and maintain the land, or the JCC may wish to donate the land to benefit the community. Our preferred option is to purchase the land, and, to this end, Nanpantan Ward Residents' Group (NWRG) has approached JCC with an offer. Should NWRG be successful, the land would be placed in a holding trust (such as Fields in Trust or one set up by residents) and FLOS will manage and maintain the land.

## Background

The majority of Nanpantan Ward lies in Charnwood Forest and the Leconfield Open Space (LOS) is sandwiched between the residential area and the Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park (LUSEP) as shown in Figure 1.

Dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the LOS itself was the grounds of the (now adjacent) grade II listed Burleigh Farmhouse and remained so until at least 1950. The border to the LOS includes the original 500-year-old hedgerows that surrounded the Farmhouse's land and these are still found on the eastern and northern perimeters of the LOS. The LOS has been used by residents as an open space since the first houses were built on Tynedale Road and Leconfield Road in 1970. From at least that time, the LOS had been used infrequently by local farmers for the grazing of cattle, but this ceased in around 2003. The land remains uncultivated apart from annual cutting of grass for hay and this has allowed significant biodiversity to become established. The land borders and helps protect the eastern perimeter of Burleigh Wood. The Wood is home to a wide variety of wildlife and residents report that the LOS is regularly visited by badgers, muntjacs, barn owls, foxes and bats. The LOS is home to many species of butterfly and bird. Birds of prey are regularly seen swooping into the land. The land has protected habitats including acid grassland and nearly the entire site is identified as a Woodland Priority Habitat Network [1].



**Figure 1** Location of Nanpantan Ward and the LOS

## Adopting the LOS

At the time of writing, NWRG is still working to protect the LOS from development. Following 77ha being given to LUSEP this is our last unallocated open space. The provision for Nanpantan identified in the Council's 2018 Open Space Strategy can now never be met. Should Leconfield Road be included in the local plan for development it will be clear that the Council will have abandoned any attempt even to reduce the open space shortfall in the Ward. Although many of our interactions with the Council Officers have not inspired confidence it will protect the land, we remain confident that the importance the Council attaches to the wellbeing of its residents will ultimately prevail.

FLOS will be happy to work with the Jean Cope Charity (JCC), the current owners of the land, to manage and maintain the land for the benefit of residents. The predecessor to this Charity donated the Outwoods to the town and may be willing to consider doing the same in this case, and we are working to make the charity aware of the affinity residents hold for the land. We would prefer that the LOS is better protected for the long term and NWRG has approached the owners to purchase the land. Should NWRG be successful, the land would be placed in a holding trust (such as Fields in Trust or one set up by residents). We are aware of the likely cost to purchase the land should it again be considered agricultural and we already have more than enough offers from local residents to cover such a sum.

As FLOS will fund the purchase of the LOS, we expect the Council to apply its Open Spaces Strategy, policy statement 1 [2 p.46] to support the acquisition.

*POLICY STATEMENT 1 - OPEN SPACE GENERAL, covers all typologies and is overarching across all other policy statements.*

*1(c) Dealing with Surpluses and Deficiencies in Open Space*

*The Council will seek to address deficiencies in open space (where typologies do not meet the standards for local communities) by identifying relevant funding sources, seeking funding applications and consideration of gain through the planning system*

*(1k) Investment in Open Spaces*

*We will explore and co-ordinate all investment opportunities in our open spaces including Heritage Lottery Funding, Sport England, etc.*

The Draft Local Plan policy LP25 [3 p.91-92] specifies the requirements to adopt an area of open space.

*We will require new open space, sport and recreation facilities to contribute towards healthier and more active lifestyles by:*

- being accessible, functional, of high quality design, visible and safe, and including facilities for a range of ages;*
- enabling links to be created with surrounding recreational networks and facilities (including public rights of way);*
- providing appropriate landscaping and a landscape scheme; and*
- specifying the responsibilities for management and maintenance prior to commencement of development and, if the site is to be transferred to the Borough Council or its nominee, agreeing a maintenance payment.*

Table 1 shows that the LOS meets all of these requirements and will be ready to be adopted by the Council as an area of allocated open space once it has been protected.

**Table 1** Demonstration that the LOS meets all the requirements of new open spaces as defined in the Draft Local Plan LP25 [3, p.91-92]

Requirement	How the requirement is met by LOS
<b>accessible</b>	The land is central in the residential area and within 400m walking distance of around 700 residents. Note that 400m is the accessibility standard used for amenity green space in the Open Spaces Strategy [2, p.32]. The land is accessible along quiet residential roads and for many residents no roads need to be crossed. An 15 minutes bus ride leaving hourly from the town passes through the Ward to the top of Leconfield Road that is just 30m from the entrance to the LOS. The Nanpantan Open Spaces Strategy aims to provide a green corridor to extend access to residents in the west of the Ward [4].
<b>functional</b>	Our residents' survey showed that the land provides (and has for 50 years) a wide range of physical, visual and wellbeing amenities for the community. The LOS has a proximity to nature, giving opportunities to view local wildlife, including muntjacs,

	badgers, foxes, bats, hares, many species of birds (some are birds of prey) and many varieties of butterfly.
<b>high-quality design</b>	The land is enclosed on all sides. Once in public hands, we will provide properly gated access, informative and welcoming signage, benches and routine path maintenance, as well as day-to-day maintenance by residents to include litter picking.
<b>visible and safe</b>	The land is on high ground, away from main roads, surrounded on all sides by hedgerows and fencing. The whole site (and hence children and dogs) can be supervised from the hill. For many in the community it is accessible along quiet residential roads often without needing to cross any roads. The local bus to town can be accessed both on arrival and departure without crossing roads.
<b>facilities for a range of ages</b>	Our survey showed the land is used for a wide range of amenities: for adults there is walking, dog walking and running; for children many games can be played on the hill and it also provides sledging in the winter. For all, the land provides picnicking, great views and the opportunities to view wildlife and nature are unique in Loughborough.
<b>links to surrounding recreational networks and facilities</b>	The land borders Burleigh Wood that is a natural open space and a path through the Wood provides access both to the Nicolson Road amenity green space and then onwards to the Kirkstone Drive play area without crossing roads. Currently, access to the Wood from the LOS requires negotiating a fence, but the University has confirmed it would consider direct access if the LOS were it in public hands. The Nanpantan Open Spaces Strategy document [4] includes a proposal for a green corridor to enhance links between our main open spaces.
<b>appropriate landscaping and a landscape scheme</b>	The land is undulating and provides a range of slopes of various gradients, making traversing the site interesting for all ages. Once in public hands, we envisage only minor initial changes, improving access from Leconfield Road and creating access to the Wood (in agreement with the University). A number of suggestions have been made for future additions to the land, but there is no strength of support at present for significant changes.
<b>specifying the responsibilities for management and maintenance prior to commencement of development</b>	The remainder of this document specifies the management and maintenance responsibilities, and these will lie with FLOS. Nanpantan residents have a history of informally managing our open spaces and many of us look forward with relish to the opportunity to look after an open space that is dear to our hearts. Note that the hedgerows on the LOS are currently maintained by the residents, residents keep tidy the local spinneys at Mardale and Nicolson, we also maintain the rose beds on Nanpantan Road and many residents regularly litter pick around the Ward, including on Nanpantan Road and Snell's Nook Lane. We even met a couple for the first time a few weeks ago who were clearing leaves from the Mardale Road open space; they said 'to make it safer for children to play'.

## Aim of FLOS

Following protection of the land by the Council, we will have a wonderful opportunity manage our open space for the benefit of residents and to enhance biodiversity in the area. The LOS is a remarkable open space in that it lies within the settlement limits of Loughborough, yet is part of the geodiversity of Charnwood Forest (being built on Cambrian Rock of a type found in other uplands of the Forest), attracts the biodiversity of Charnwood Forest (being adjacent to the ancient Burleigh Wood) and lies on land that forms the historic setting of a grade II listed property. It affords wonderful views of Loughborough and Charnwood. The LOS is an important resource for the town and one that can be made accessible for all.

The aim of the FLOS is **to preserve Leconfield Open Space as an attractive and welcoming place for visitors while protecting and enhancing its biodiversity.**

## Objectives

We have put together an initial set of objectives for the future management of the LOS. The nature of the place is one that residents love and enjoy in its current state and, consequently, we are not proposing any substantial changes. We do remain very open to modifications to the listed objectives and how they will be achieved, particularly if they further enhance the biodiversity of the land. We will elicit and welcome input from stakeholders who have specialist knowledge of biodiversity.

The main objectives of FLOS and how these will be achieved are listed below.

### (1) Manage the maintenance work

- identify required maintenance work
- plan and implement minor maintenance work to be carried by members
- manage major works carried out by members, by other volunteer groups or by commercial contractors

### (2) Protect and enhance biodiversity

- elicit expert the advice of key stakeholders (see the 'Stakeholders' section of the document).
- identify and monitor specific areas to be protected, such as acid grassland and protected habitats
- conserve the borders with Burleigh Wood and the ancient hedgerows on-site.

### (3) Raise funds for major maintenance work

- implement fundraising schemes, such as a patron scheme and crowdfunding
- run fund-raising events.

### (4) Protect important features of the land

- conserve the setting of Burleigh Farmhouse
- preserve the geodiversity of the ancient Cambrian rock

### (5) Ensure the safety and accessibility of the land

- manage the LOS in compliance with Council requirements to allow its listing on the Policy Map.
- assessment of risk for any work will be carried out and recommendations implemented
- design and maintain accessible gating

### (6) Increase awareness of the features of the LOS and attract visitors

- erect signage relating to the geodiversity, biodiversity and heritage of the land
- produce and distribute leafleted information for Charnwood residents and schools

## Maintenance requirements

We have put together an initial plan of the maintenance activities required for the LOS. This list remains to be refined in consultation with stakeholders, particularly in terms of managing the biodiversity on the land. The maintenance will be managed and principally carried out by FLOS.

### ***Day-to-day maintenance***

We have many residents who visit the LOS daily, so a visual inspection of the site will take place a number of times each week on an informal basis. Tasks performed on a day-to-day basis will include:

- removal of litter; and
- identification of issues requiring further attention will be logged with the FLOS Secretary

### ***Regular maintenance***

These activities will take place on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on the issue raised and the priority in terms of safety. We would normally expect the minor costs involved to be covered by FLOS or the residents performing the repairs.

- identify and repair minor damage to entrances, fencing, hedgerows and benches.
- clean signage.
- keep grass short along paths.
- maintain hedgerows and fencing.



- manage the areas of biodiversity (precise tasks to be determined in consultation with stakeholders).

### ***Maintenance involving capital expenditure***

These tasks would require funding and how we will raise the required funds is discussed in the 'Maintenance funding' section. These tasks would include:

- major repairs or replacement of entrances, fencing and benches;
- new planting or re-planting of hedgerows;
- major repairs or replacement of signage; and
- enhancement to areas of biodiversity (as advised by stakeholders with expertise in this area).

## **Funding of maintenance**

Nanpantan residents have a history of maintaining our open space. The Council will be aware that members of the NWRG and the wider Nanpantan community contribute to the day-to-day maintenance of the spinneys near Mardale Road and Nicolson Road. A number of residents also work on maintaining the rose beds along Nanpantan Road and many local people regularly pick up litter in our local streets, including along Nanpantan Road and Snell's Nook Lane. We are proud of our Ward and we expect the Council to continue to put its trust in FLOS to manage and maintain the LOS, as we have done previously for our other open space.

To remove any financial burden for the Council, FLOS will carry out the day-to-day management of the land and will raise funds to support any capital costs, such as gating and fencing, designing, manufacturing and installing signs and the purchase of benches. We would welcome the Council having oversight of these ventures to help ensure compliance with safety requirements.

We expect the majority of the fund raising will occur within the local community using a patron scheme, local events, raffles and crowdfunding initiatives.

It is likely that the maintenance of the LOS will only occasionally require significant capital funding. We will keep an ongoing watch for potential sources of funding in case larger projects need to be supported, such as the planting of new hedgerows or installing fencing. For example, we are currently aware that the Loughborough Town Deal that has received funding for projects including 'improving or creating new parks and green spaces and sustainable transport links' and so could be a suitable source of support [5]. We may also be able to seek funding from the National Forest Company that recently obtained National Lottery support for its Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme [6]. We are also aware of a number of charitable sources including Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation, National Lottery, Heritage Lottery, Postcode Lottery Trust, People's Health Trust, Crowdfunding and Easy Fundraising. National Government issued the document 'Potential funding for community green spaces' [7] which provides useful advice, but some of the guidance is likely to be out-of-date as it was published in 2012.

We are aware and grateful that the Council would be prepared to support bids for funding. Two of the Council's Open Spaces Strategy [2 p.7] objectives are to

- *Deliver good practice in the management of new and existing open space;*
- *Support and enable bids for funding to improve the network of open spaces*

## **Natural characteristics to be retained**

The LOS has many important characteristics that we would wish to retain should the land be protected, many of the features making it unique as an area of open space in Loughborough. The land will largely remain as it is so that it can continue to provide the following important amenities to residents and the local wildlife, flora and fauna.

- The hill on the land provides extensive open views over Loughborough, Figure 2(a), including the Carillon and the Wolds, Figure 2(b). This the highest open space in Loughborough and there is no comparable view from any other open space in the town, making the LOS a valuable and unique space that cannot be lost. Installing a bench may enhance enjoyment of this view.
- The LOS will remain largely unchanged to retain its abundant wildlife, including muntjacs, foxes, badgers, bats, hares, many bird species (including birds of prey) and many varieties of butterfly.

- The LOS has two priority habitats that will be fully identified and protected, namely an area of acid grassland identified by the Council's ecology survey and much of the land has been identified by Defra as a 'Woodland Priority Habitat Network' [1].
- The hill on the LOS must remain sufficiently clear of vegetation in the winter to provide local children with the opportunity for sledging, Figure 2(d). The hill gets extremely busy following winter snowfall and residents who overlook the LOS estimate that more than a hundred children will sometimes visit in a day. We are unaware of an alternative and *safe* place for our children to access by themselves to engage in this activity.
- We would like to ease the access to Burleigh Wood for recreation purposes and to allow University and LUSEP staff living in the Ward to commute to their place of work with an 'open spaces walk', reducing the number of car journeys. Our planned green corridors (see 'Future NWRG initiatives') will allow children living near Leconfield Road and in Nanpantan village to access Holywell School without crossing any roads. This will give these children a far more fun and memorable journey to school (mud permitting).



(a) The view to the east from the LOS provides a panorama over Loughborough



(b) Expanding the superimposed rectangle in (a), the Carillon and the Wolds beyond can be seen



(c) To the west, an inviting path leads into Burleigh Wood



(d) Sledging on the LOS in February 2015

**Figure 2** Some of the wide range of amenities provided by the LOS, many of which are unique in Loughborough.

## Proposed changes to the open space

As the priority will be to retain and enhance the biodiversity of the land, the few changes planned relate mainly to improving access to the site.

- At the Leconfield Road entrance, a public gate will be provided for pedestrians. The gate will be designed to allow accessibility for all residents.
- At the Leconfield Road entrance, an access gate will be provided for service vehicles. This gate will normally be locked, with key holders being members of FLOS and the Council
- An oak tree will be planted near the entrance to the LOS. The old oak tree here was a welcoming sight to local visitors but was cut down in 2007 and never replaced despite a planning order being in place. We aim to raise funds for as large an oak tree as is reasonable to plant here!

- Install a small number of benches to allow visitors to rest awhile and enjoy the views over Loughborough and to the Wolds beyond.

The University has confirmed to us that it would consider access to Burleigh Wood from the LOS should it become public land. This will provide a path through the wood (or alternatively along the track leading from the north-west corner of the LOS if this were also public) to Nicolson Road and then to Kirkstone Drive, thereby connecting all of our major areas of green open space by foot and without negotiating roads. This would make a great family outing easily accessible from many points in Nanpantan.

Over time, we would like the area adjacent to Burleigh Wood to become a more informal, natural transition to the wood to help support and attract wildlife. We will work with local conservation experts to develop appropriate ways to enhance or establish such areas (see the 'Stakeholders' section). This will make an important contribution to implementing the open spaces initiatives of the Town Deal [5]. As most of the open space is a Woodland Priority Habitat Network we can apply to the Woodland Trust for additional tree planting, if recommended by ecology stakeholders [1].

## Promotion of the open space

The LOS is an attractive place for all Charnwood residents to visit and we wish to make it welcoming for all. The National Forest Landscape Partnership is also looking to protect Charnwood Forest by reducing the focus on major sites and spreading visits more widely across the Forest [6. p.6]. The LOS would help alleviate this pressure.

*While future growth of the local population is a cause for concern, there are already over 1.5 million people living within half an hour's drive of Charnwood Forest. **Much of the visitor pressure in Charnwood is focused on a few 'honey-pot' sites such as Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill and the Outwoods.** However, each of these is a valuable habitat in its own right and growing visitor numbers are starting to impact on their wildlife. While Charnwood has a network of footpaths and bridleways, this network has gaps in key locations and these gaps make it difficult to move people beyond the honeypot sites to explore the wider landscape. **If we cannot spread the visitor pressure more evenly, our key sites may be damaged.***

FLOS would make on-site information available to the local community to help inform and educate residents about the important human and natural history of the land, its heritage and biodiversity. We will provide the following.

- An information board detailing the geodiversity of the LOS and its geological association with other Charnwood Forest hills including the Outwoods and the Beacon (we are in contact with experts at Leicester University who can provide this information).
- An information board about wildlife, flora and fauna (we know local experts who can advise).
- Leafleted information for residents and schools to be distributed in the Borough. The LOS is accessible by an hourly local bus from Loughborough town centre that stops near the top of Leconfield Road. It is then a 30-metre walk to access the LOS (and Burleigh Wood beyond) without crossing roads. This can make accessing the area very easy and affordable for all Loughborough residents and local schools.

## Stakeholders

The principal stakeholders will be residents, who, through FLOS, will be able to determine how the LOS should best serve the community and its biodiversity protected. We will take advice from a number of other stakeholders in securing the future of this open space.

The survey carried out for the Loughborough Town Deal [8] showed that residents would like more access to local open space and wildlife. Protecting the LOS would provide a demonstration that the Council is really listening to residents. Many other initiatives in the Charnwood Forest are being implemented by the National Forest Company [5] and by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) [10] and we would endeavour to work with these bodies and others to help maintain this important part of the Charnwood Forest.

Other major stakeholders are listed below, although we are aware that a number of residents have professional or amateur ecological knowledge that we would also take into account.



### **Owners of the properties bordering the LOS**

The hedgerows that surround the LOS, some of which are at least 500 years old, are mainly maintained by the owners of the properties. This will continue, but FLOS will support this maintenance should the owners have any difficulty in providing upkeep.

### **Loughborough University**

NWRG hold regular meetings with University representatives and we already in contact with regards to a suitable buffer to Burleigh Wood, extending the Wood into the LOS and providing direct access to the Wood from the LOS (a fence separates the two at present). The ancient track that starts from the LOS and separates Burleigh Wood and the houses at Montague Drive and Compton Close should be brought into the hands of either the University or FLOS and properly maintained.

We have admired how the University has managed Holywell Wood in providing a substantial buffer to its northern border (of area similar to the LOS) and we will seek to use their expert advice to help ensure best practice in ensuring the LOS provides a suitable environment to extend the ecology of the Woods.

### **Charnwood Borough Council**

The aim for the LOS includes the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity and this is in accordance with the Core Strategy strategic objective SO11 [11, p.17] and the extended version of this objective in the Draft Local Plan vision [3 p.14].

*To protect the special and distinctive qualities of all landscapes, maintaining local distinctiveness and sense of place, and paying special attention to impacts on Charnwood Forest, supporting the National Forest Strategy and tree planting throughout the Borough.*

The LOS is visited by many forms of wildlife and in terms of habitats, the LOS vision also needs to comply with Core Strategy strategic objective SO12 [11, p.17].

*To maintain and enhance the range of ecological sites, habitats and species found in Charnwood and seek to deliver biodiversity gain and reverse habitat fragmentation;*

The Draft Local Plan goes further in recognizing the importance of habitats in Charnwood Forest [3 p.82].

*For us, Charnwood Forest and the National Forest, along with the floodplain of the River Soar and River Wreake valleys are recognised as having high value for wildlife because of the quality of existing habitats.*

The Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, [12, p.127] in referring to the Loughborough Charnwood Forest Fringes states that

*opportunities should be taken to create and enhance feature woodland blocks*

Most of the LOS is a Woodland Priority Habitat Network [1]. We will seek to extend and ensure the transition from the residential area to the Wood is retained for its protection and that of the wildlife that reside there.

We will also make sure that the land will be managed in a manner that complies with Council requirements, particularly carrying out appropriate risk assessments for safety considerations.

### **Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust**

The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) has specific concerns regarding the fragmentation of Charnwood Forest [13]. Burleigh Wood would become even more isolated from the rest of Charnwood Forest should any development take place at LOS. FLOS will work with LRWT to avoid fragmentation and develop the ideas for providing green corridors to connect our green infrastructure to the wider Charnwood Forest (see the section on 'Future NWRG initiatives' below). We are in contact with the Head of Conservation at LRWT in this regard.

### **National Forest Company**

The National Forest Company has expressed interest in working with us should the land be protected.

## **Management structure**

FLOS will require a management structure for its committee. This is likely to follow that of a typical Friends Group, consisting of a Chairperson to lead the group and be the main link with the Council, a

Vice-Chairperson, a Secretary to take minutes and keep members informed of activities and a Treasurer to take care of the group's finances.

FLOS will have a wider group of members who will have voting rights in the election of committee members. We currently have a very large potential pool of members. We aim to hold an on-line initial meeting in the next two to three weeks to elect the committee and finalize the constitution.

The group will need insurance as it will be overseeing practical activities and will apply to be Charitable Trust as funds need to be raised. A draft constitution has also been produced. Expert advice has already been made available from members of NWRG who have experience of running charities and companies.

## **Future NWRG initiatives**

The LRWT has expressed concern regarding the increasing isolation of parts of the Charnwood Forest [13] and we are proposing two green corridors both entirely within the Forest. More details can be found in [4].

The first green corridor will connect the main open spaces in the Ward without crossing any roads while also providing access to open space for residents along the more westerly section of Nanpantan Road and for those in Nanpantan village itself. These residents currently do not have access to open space within the specified 400m distance [14, p.32], but the green corridor will institute a route to the land at the top of Leconfield Road. Joining all these open spaces will provide a great outing accessible from many points in the Ward and one that can include child and family play, access to nature and great views across Loughborough.

The second green corridor will connect the areas within the Ward that are characteristic of the Charnwood Forest to well-established parts of the Forest, particularly the Outwoods. The areas within the Ward that are characteristic of the Charnwood Forest in the Ward are Burleigh and Holywell Woods (due to their natural amenities) and the land at the top of Leconfield Road (whose upland is formed of Cambrian rock characteristic of other hills in the Forest). NWRG is working towards making a bid to the Severn Trent Community Fund (deadline early next year) to fund a path from Nanpantan Road over the Nanpantan Reservoir sluice and onwards to Jubilee Woods and the Outwoods. Before the fund was announced, Nick Ball of NWRG was working on this with Matt Bradford at the Council and Domonic Robinson from Severn Trent Water.

## **Conclusions**

Nanpantan Ward is woefully short of amenity green space and the LOS is the only open space that can make a contribution to reducing the shortfall. National and local policies dictate that the LOS must be protected. For 50 years, the open space has provided many physical, visual and wellbeing amenities and, over the generations, residents have developed a strong fondness for this special place. This affection has been demonstrated by the large numbers of impassioned responses to the draft local plan consultation and to the survey, as well as the huge attendance at the protest in the midst of a pandemic and the overwhelming number of signatories to the petition.

We are aware of the financial issues that local Councils face, making it difficult to fund new open spaces, both in for their outright purchase and in their maintenance. FLOS will remove this financial burden and allow the Leconfield open space to be adopted. The residents of the Ward have a history of caring for our open space and we cannot wait to look after an area of land we have demonstrated (many times now) that we passionately care about.

What we require from the Council is that the land is protected. The Planning Office is aware that there are more than sufficient policy arguments to protect the open space and that the requirements for Local Green Space designation can be easily met by this land. However, it is the wellbeing of residents that is paramount and this should be more than enough to tip the balance in favour of protection.

## Acknowledgments

Much of the detailed content has come from the members of Nanpantan Ward Residents' Group. Thank you also to the Open Spaces Society, Loughborough University, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and the Planning Office at Charnwood Borough Council for informative discussions.

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